

**REMARKS**

Upon entry of the present Amendment the Claims under consideration are 1-22. Claims 23 -26 have been withdrawn as directed to a nonelected embodiment. Applicants have hereby amended independent Claim 1 and dependent Claims 2-4 and 7-8 to more clearly state the nature of the invention, or to retain consistency of antecedent basis throughout the claims. No new matter has been added.

The Detailed Action of 29 January 2004 will now be addressed with reference to the headings and any paragraph numbers therein.

**Election/Restrictions**

Responsive to the restriction requirement of paragraph 1 of the Detailed Action, Applicants elect Group I, Claims 1-22.

**Claim Rejections -35 USC §112**

Per paragraph 7 of the Detailed Action, Claims 1-22 stand rejected as indefinite because it is considered unclear what is taken to be a sheath of a multicomponent filament when the filament is a side-by-side filament. As suggested by the Examiner's remarks, Applicants have amended the Claims to recite the first and second polymer components of the multicomponent filaments as described in the specification at page 12, line 18. The dependency of Claim 3 is left unchanged due to the amending of Claim 1. Applicants have further amended Claim 7 and Claim 8 to recite that the melting point of the meltblown filaments is lower, and higher, respectively, than the melting point of both polymers of the spunbond filaments.

**Claim Rejections -35 USC §102**

Per paragraph 9 of the Detailed Action, Claims 1, 4-6, 9-12 and 15-22 stand as anticipated by PCT Application WO 00/29658 (hereinafter WO '658). Applicants have hereby amended Claim 1 to recite that the first polymer is fully activated, not just exposed to a melting point temperature. Applicants have hereby further amended Claim 1 to recite that the densification of the web takes place while the web is fully activated, thereby ensuring that the most contact between the absorbent and liquid polymer takes place. Without implication as to the meaning or breadth of claims in the WO '658 reference, after careful study of WO '658, Applicants do not believe that the reference discloses either of these limitations of the present invention. Therefore, WO '658 cannot and does not anticipate the present invention. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present rejection be withdrawn.

**Claim Rejections -35 USC §103**

Per paragraph 11 of the Detailed Action, Claims 7-8 stand as obvious over WO '658) as applied to Claims 5-6 above.

Claims 7 and 8 are ultimately dependent upon Claim 1. Applicants incorporate their discussion with respect to the inapplicability of WO '658 to the amended Claim 1. Neither is there disclosure in the reference which would direct the person having ordinary skill in the art to the present invention as a whole. As Claims 7 and 8 incorporate all limitations of Claim 1, they are also believed to define over WO '658. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present rejection be withdrawn.

Per paragraph 12 of the Detailed Action, Claims 2-3 and 14 stand as obvious over WO '658 in view of Jackson *et al.* (U.S. Patent 5,350,370, hereinafter Jackson). Applicants incorporate their discussion with respect to the inapplicability of WO '658 to the amended Claim 1 and further believe that no suggestion can be reasonably drawn from WO '658 concerning the combination of fully activated first polymer concurrent with a densification of the web. Without implication as to the meaning or breadth of claims in the Jackson reference, after careful study of Jackson, it is not believed that Jackson teaches or suggests that the first polymer is fully activated, rather than just exposed to a melting point temperature. Applicants further do not believe that Jackson teaches that the densification of the web takes place while the web is fully activated, thereby ensuring that maximal contact between the absorbent and liquid polymer takes place. Thus, the reference would not direct the person having ordinary skill in the art to the present invention as a whole. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present rejection be withdrawn.

Per paragraph 13 of the Detailed Action, Claim 13 stands as obvious over WO '658 in view of Haynes *et al.* (U.S. Patent 6,019,152, hereinafter Haynes). Applicants incorporate their discussion with respect to the inapplicability of WO '658 to the amended Claim 1 and further believe that no suggestion can be reasonably drawn from WO '658 concerning the combination of fully activated first polymer concurrent with a densification of the web. Further, without implication as to the meaning or breadth of claims in the Haynes reference, after careful study of Haynes, it is not believed that Haynes teaches or suggests that a first polymer is fully activated in conjunction with the densification of a collected mass of

filaments and commingled absorbent material which takes place while the first polymer is fully activated. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present rejection be withdrawn.

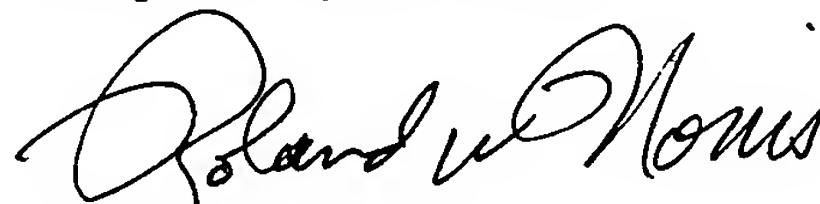
For all the foregoing reasons, the Claims as presently amended are believed to be allowable over the art of record. A notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Request For Telephonic Interview

Clearly, there are differences between the present invention and the cited reference(s) involving patentable subject matter. These differences are believed by the Applicants to be properly defined in the present Claims. The Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney (per the provisions of M.P.E.P. § 713) to discuss any further problems or suggest solutions in defining the present invention in order to expedite the case towards allowance before issuing a final Office Action.

Favorable consideration is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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